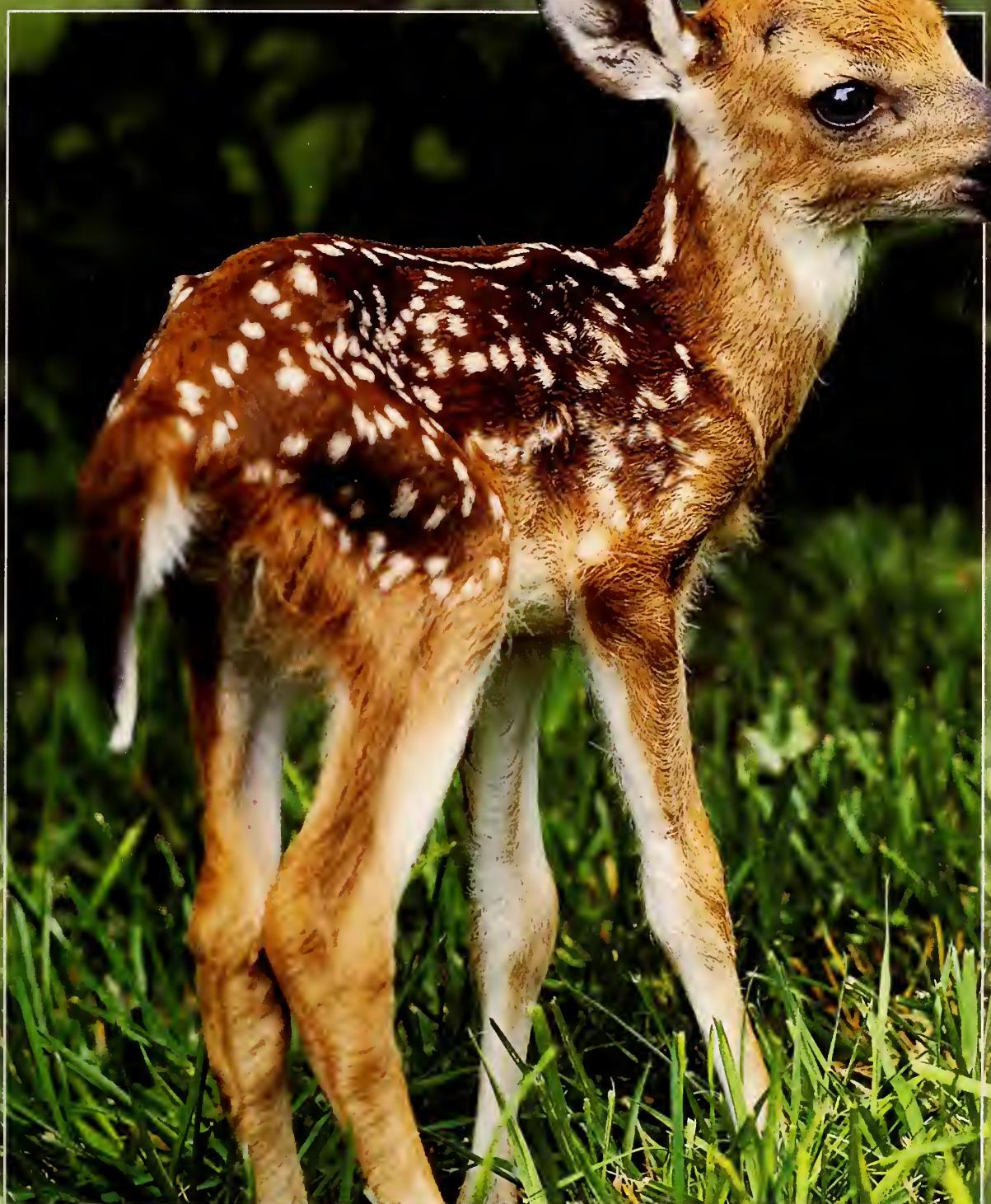


VIRGINIA WILDLIFE

JUNE 1999

ONE DOLLAR





Director's Column

William L. Woodfin, Jr

Last month I was very pleased to call attention to some of the really good things going on across the Commonwealth to get our youth involved in the positive experiences offered by outdoor activities. Just to follow-up with that briefly, I want to share with our readers some information about a recent event where we had the good fortune to work with the Boy Scouts. On a somewhat stormy spring Friday a few weeks ago, over 1,000 Boy Scouts arrived at our Chickahominy Wildlife Management Area, in Charles City County. Sponsored by the Battlefield and Capitol Districts of the Robert E. Lee Council of the Boy Scouts of America and our department, the 1999 Spring Camporee – Scout Extravaganza gave these youngsters the chance to participate in dozens of activities with a hunting and fishing theme. At the event's opening ceremony on Saturday morning, the participants heard the Honorable John H. Hager, Lieutenant Governor of Virginia, talk about how the scouting experience leads to an appreciation for the outdoors and our natural resources. The Honorable John Paul Woodley, Jr., Secretary of Natural Resources, also spoke to the group about how teamwork and partnerships play such a big part in what we do in life. At the conclusion of the weekend, all of the scouts attending this event certainly departed with a deeper respect for our wildlife resources. You will note that I often speak of the memories created by our experiences in the outdoors, and

I can certainly tell you that over 1,000 young people at this camporee left with a vivid memory of the intense thunderstorm that blew through the area on their first evening. And more likely than not, their memory of this episode will be one they look forward to sharing. But then again, sharing is what memories are all about.

Please do not forget Virginia's Free Fishing days on June 5-6. On these two days, no license will be required for freshwater fishing except for designated stocked trout waters. You should note, however, that free fishing days do not apply to areas that require a saltwater fishing license. I hope that everyone will take advantage of this time to enjoy a weekend of great fishing. It could be the ideal opportunity to just pick up the phone and call a friend you may not have heard from in a while and say, "let's go fishing." You may even know a youngster who would have the



Lee Walker

memory of a lifetime if you invite them to also join you. So don't miss this opportunity to fish for free and to share some wonderful fellowship at the same time.



©Dwight Dyke

Over 1,000 Boy Scouts gathered at Chickahominy Wildlife Management Area, in Charles City County, to participate in the 1999 Spring Camporee.

Mission Statement

To manage Virginia's wildlife and inland fish to maintain optimum populations of all species to serve the needs of the Commonwealth; to provide opportunity for all to enjoy wildlife, inland fish, boating and related outdoor recreation; to promote safety for persons and property in connection with boating, hunting and fishing.

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Looking for a place to get up close and personal with nature?
Check out Huntley Meadows Park, An Oasis in Suburbia on page 12.

VIRGINIA WILDLIFE

Cover: White-tailed deer fawn, *Odocoileus virginianus*.
Fawns are usually born in late spring and become weaned in four months, at which time they will lose their spots.

Back cover: Bullfrog, *Rana catesbeiana*. Bullfrogs are found throughout much of Virginia. Their habitat includes streams, ponds and marshes. Females can lay up to 20,000 eggs and adult bullfrogs can grow up to five inches in length.

Features

4 Of Fathers and Whip-poor-wills by Noey Vineyard
An unexpected introduction provides a special lesson.

8 Sauger Savvy by Tom Hampton
Southwest Virginia offers anglers unique opportunities to catch this delectable delicacy.

12 Huntley Meadows Park, An Oasis in Suburbia
by King Montgomery
People find refuge here, as well as wildlife.

18 Birding Virginia's Western Rivers by Bruce Ingram
Add some additional enjoyment to your next fishing or float trip.

23 Yes, Virginia, there is an Opening Day! by George Duckwall
It's a little like Christmas for trout fishermen.

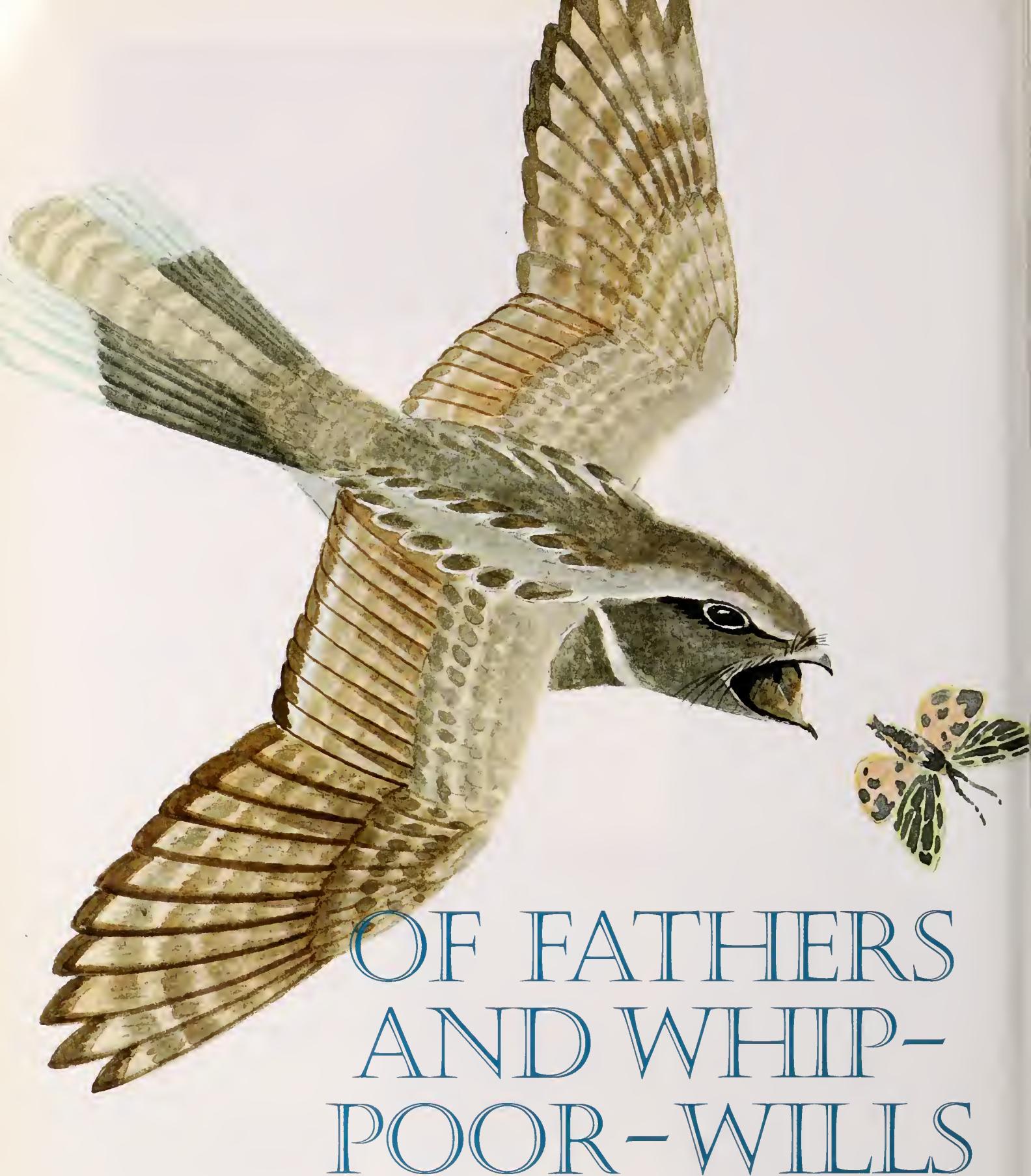
June Journal

28 Journal	33 June Afield
31 Recipes	34 On The Water
32 Photo Tips	35 Naturally Wild

Dedicated to the Conservation of Virginia's Wildlife and Natural Resources

VOLUME 60

NUMBER 6



OF FATHERS AND WHIP- POOR-WILLS

Seldom seen, but often heard, this bird of the night is as mysterious as its haunting songs.

by Noey Vineyard
illustrations by Spike Knuth

It was just a small brown blur against the rich brown and green carpet of the Virginia forest behind my house. I almost missed her, and if I hadn't stopped to daydream, I would have. It was a whip-poor-will. Even after I did see her I couldn't believe my eyes. She was about four feet in front of me and blended in so well with her surroundings that I kept losing her in the background.

I was stunned. Although whip-poor-wills are not rare, seeing one this close up is. In 34 years in the outdoors, I had seen two and this was my third. The rolling and oft times steep hills behind my house go all the way to the Potomac River. With

the family out shopping, I had decided to take a walk, maybe do a little daydreaming, something that I am famous for, especially when there is work to be done.

I stood there a moment and thought about the many times I had sat on the river bank at dusk, listening to the haunting song of this smallish, homely-looking bird. While Mother Nature may have been stingy on looks, she more than made up for it with a beautiful voice.

I clearly remember the first time I heard that soul touching voice. Fishing with my father as a young boy, I remember how we sat and listened, and how it seemed to me that we were being given a special concert,

one that would rival any opera on earth. We sat there as father and son, not talking, not moving, not really fishing any more, just simply listening, enraptured by one of Mother Nature's finest vocalists.

Suddenly, I was jarred from my reverie by a sudden movement from the whip-poor-will. She was opening her very impressive mouth to make an awesome display of the bristles around her mouth. Before I could figure out why she was being aggressive, I caught another movement out of the corner of my eye. The sight of the whip-poor-will caught me by surprise. But what I saw next really stunned me. Two fuzzy little chicks, still too young to



fly, sat watching this little scene unfold with wide eyes, not three feet from where I was standing.

Whip-poor-wills don't make nests like other birds. They simply find a good nesting spot and hatch their chicks right on the ground. What came next is a little hard to believe, but true nonetheless.

I suppose that I overstayed my welcome because she grew tired of threats and actually attacked me. She flogged me with her wings, and so sudden and so ferocious was this attack that I

backed off a couple of steps. When I did this she dropped to the ground and started fluttering and limping away in the opposite direction of her chicks, trying to get me to follow. Now, I was still taken aback by the attack and I didn't catch on right

away as to what she was doing and when I didn't move fast enough she came back and flogged me again.

This time when she fluttered off I followed her, figuring since she had gone to so much trouble to lead me away, the least I could do was coop-



erate and follow. She led me on a merry little chase. I thought it funny that she really did look hurt the way she was fluttering around, but no matter what kind of burst of speed I put on, I never got close. She was obviously an old pro at this. After she led me away far enough to suit her, she dropped the act, took wing and was gone, just like that.

Although I would have loved to have seen the chicks again, I didn't go back. I thought her valor had earned her the time and privacy with her family. It left me feeling both sad and privileged at the same time. I felt privileged that I was able to witness something very few people ever see, and thought of the people that would have walked right by that little bird. I knew that I was also privileged to have a father who taught me as a young boy how to stop and just observe things around me.

Things like, how to ease up to a riverbank and see where the fish were hiding; then cast without spooking them. How to watch the edge of dove field for the red-tailed hawk that is always waiting to snatch a dove from the air, or how to be still enough to let a white-tailed doe and her fawn walk within touching distance without them ever knowing I am there.

There was also a little sadness in the fact that there was no one out here to share it with. Even "Otis the fish dog" had opted for a nap rather than a walk. It left me feeling a little empty inside because I knew that was a once in a lifetime occurrence.

The thought of telling my kids about this excited me, and a strange realization dawned on me. Somewhere along the way and through the years I had gone from student to teacher, from son to father. Now it was my responsibility to teach my kids the things I had learned from my father. It was a full-time and often frustrating job, but I was more than familiar with the rewards. I turned my steps towards home, but something was still missing. My ancestors believed the song of the whip-poor-will held strong magic. Yet I still felt hollow inside. It was

more than just not being able to show my kids something. I felt like this experience was incomplete.

I didn't realize what it was until I walked into an empty house. Becky and the kids were still out and even "Otis the fish dog" seemed more interested in laying on my good recliner than listening to my adventure. I sat for a little while, puzzled by my feelings, when it hit me.

I called my father. I told him about my day and he listened with an interest that only a father could have. We talked for a long time and as we talked the magic of the whip-poor-will flooded through me, and once again I was the son, talking to my father. We talked about things that fathers and sons talk about, and as the sun dipped below the trees and dusk began to shadow the earth, I heard the soulful song of the whip-poor-will echoing through the trees. □

Noey Vineyard is a U.S. Marine stationed at Quantico, Virginia, and writes an outdoor column for the base paper called "The Sporting Life."

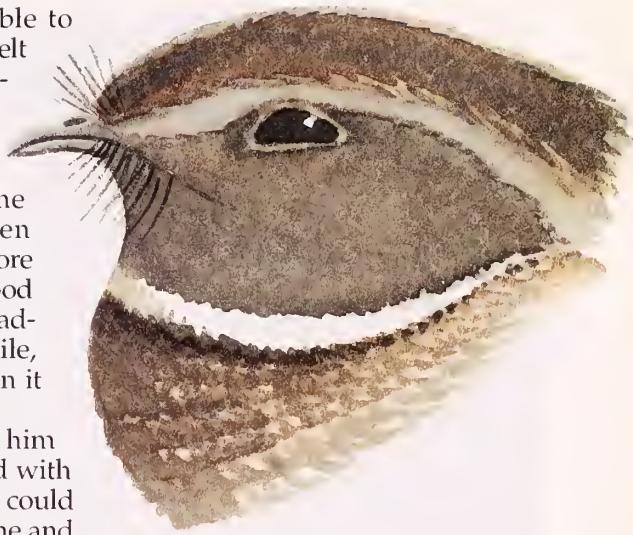
THE WHIP-POOR-WILL

Caprimulgus vociferus

The whip-poor-will is a bird almost everyone can identify by its call, but have probably never seen one. One reason is that it is nocturnal. It moves around only at night. Once in awhile, late at night, or early in the morning before sunrise, you might flush one from some small side road through a woodlands, or see its eyes glowing red in your headlights.

If you've spent a night in a cabin in the woods, or live near undisturbed woodlands, you've heard them call. A pleasant-sounding call at first, but its incessant calling can become annoying! Tape recordings have revealed that they may repeat their calls up to 1,000 times or more!

The whip-poor-will's scientific names "cave mouth with a strong voice," is a reference to its large



Named for its haunting call, this nocturnal inhabitant of the forest can be heard singing repeatedly at dawn and dusk, "whip-poor-will, whip-poor-will".

mouth and loud calling. It is a member of the goatsucker family, which includes the Chuck-wills-widow, the call of which starts with a "chuck," and the nighthawk, a more pointed-winged cousin of the cities. Nightjar is another of its nicknames.

Whip-poor-wills are 9½ to 10½ inches long. They are dressed in variegated browns, buffs and blacks, providing them with natural camouflage. They have large, rounded wings, rounded tail, and a large mouth surrounded by stiff bristles which helps them catch and hold winged insects. Moths, beetles and mosquitoes are their main foods.

They prefer undisturbed woods and will come to clearings in the woods to call. Its numbers have diminished as our subdivisions have moved outward into wooded areas. It's almost invisible on the ground. This is where it nests, usually under dense vegetative cover, often returning to the same area year after year. Two eggs are laid in the leaves. If an intruder happens upon the nest, the female will feign an injured wing and try to lure the interloper away.

Whip-poor-wills usually leave Virginia by early October and winter along the south Atlantic Coast from the Carolinas to Florida and along the Gulf Coast. □



*Anglers in southwestern
Virginia are dredging up
delectable treats.*



by Tom Hampton

Unknown to many Virginia anglers, the sauger is a sportfish worthy of recognition. They are closely related to the walleye, and share many of the characteristics that make these large

members of the perch family so popular with anglers. Limited distribution and low population levels have prevented widespread appreciation of the sauger as a sportfish in the past. However, populations are recovering in the Clinch and Powell rivers of Southwest Virginia, and are providing unique opportunities that should appeal to anglers across the Commonwealth.

Identification

At first glance a sauger may look like a walleye, but closer examination will reveal some obvious differences. Two basic differences between the species are body shape and coloration. The body shape of a sauger is much more streamlined than that of a walleye. The sauger is shaped like a tube, whereas the walleye has a noticeable gut and a deeper body. A cross section of a sauger would be almost a perfect circle, compared to a walleye cross section that would be more pear-shaped. Body shape is a good characteristic to look at, regardless of how small or large the fish is, but it will quickly re-



Sauger

Stizostedion canadense

Similar to walleye, sauger are identified by their sides, which are dark yellowish brown with dark blotches. Currently they are found in the Clinch and Powell rivers and prefer deep water.



Walleye

Stizostedion vitreum

Their brassy-olive sides flecked with green and gold and mottled by six to eight dark faint markings distinguish walleye. They range throughout much of Virginia. Deep, cool clear water with a moderate current and rocky bottom is their preferred habitat. Illustrations by Michael Simon.

Sauger Savvy

veal the difference between sauger and walleye over 15 inches in length. Coloration is another key to identifying sauger and walleye. Although any fish's color can vary in different water clarity and habitat types, both the background color and the saddle-like pattern on a sauger can be used for identification purposes. Brightly colored sauger exhibit dark brown saddles on a gold background, and pale speci-

mens have gray saddles on a light background. Walleye are typically greenish gray along the back and light colored below the lateral line. Individual walleye may have more or less color than others, but no walleye has the saddle-like pattern found on sauger. Some fin differences are also evident. The spiny dorsal fin of the sauger is peppered with large distinct black spots. The same fin on a walleye will be clear or

may have some minor streaking near the spines. Also, the characteristic white blotch on the lower lobe of a walleye's caudal fin is much more subdued on a sauger.

Size

Sauger do not grow as large as walleye. In Virginia rivers, an average sauger is about 12 to 14 inches long and weighs from one-half to about two-thirds of a pound. An 18-inch sauger weighs about two pounds, and should be considered a trophy. A sauger over 20 inches long is rare in Virginia waters. By comparison, walleye grow much faster and much larger. Walleye over 20 inches are caught in many Virginia waters.

Habits and Habitats

Sauger are extremely light sensitive, even more so than walleye. In lakes and larger rivers, sauger will locate deeper than walleye to avoid bright light. Activity peaks in the low light periods of dawn and dusk in clear water conditions. In muddy or stained water, or under heavy cloud cover, sauger may be active all day long.

Like walleyes, sauger migrate upriver in spring searching for spawning areas. Migrating fish often concentrate below barriers such as dams, natural ledges, and extensive shallow riffles. Sauger spawn over gravel shoals at water temperatures from 45 to 50°F. Al-

though they can be caught year-round, the spring "run" is the most popular time to fish for sauger.

Sauger feed primarily on minnows. It stands to reason that live minnows, jigs with soft plastics, and a variety of minnow-imitating plugs top the list of sauger baits. They also bite on night crawlers, crawdads and salamanders (live and artificial). The best presentations keep the lure or live bait very close to the bottom, where sauger spend the majority of their time.

Light-sensitive eyes and a streamlined body shape make sauger well suited to the stained water and strong current of rivers. Current breaks and slack water areas may concentrate fish, but



sauger can also be found in fast water. Sauger may be located in the main current at the head or tail of a river pool during low or normal flow periods. High water may force sauger into slack water areas behind boulders, submerged trees, or bridge abutments. Sauger may remain active in muddy water and strong currents that would send walleye looking for the nearest cover.

The present distribution of sauger in Virginia is limited to the Clinch and Powell rivers and their tributaries. Sauger are available throughout most of the Clinch River, and in some of the larger tributaries. Distribution data from the Powell River is limited, but the lower reaches of the river in Lee County probably offer better fishing than the upper reaches.

Trophies... Past and Future

The historic Virginia state record sauger weighed over 5 pounds, and was caught in South Holston Lake. The world record sauger weighed 8 pounds, 12 ounces, and was caught in Lake Sakakawea, North Dakota. Although it is unlikely that sauger living in a river would reach such large sizes, some very nice fish have been landed in the Clinch and Powell rivers in recent years.

Sauger were recently added to the list of fish acknowledged by the Virginia Angler Recognition Program. Anglers who land trophy sauger are now eligible to receive an award to honor the trophy fish and the angler's accomplishment. Sauger that meet or exceed a length of 18 inches or weight of 2 pounds now qualify for trophy recognition. Only trophy sauger entries from the Clinch and Powell Rivers (or their tributaries) will be considered. □

Tom Hampton is a fisheries biologist senior with the Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries in Marion, Virginia.



©Dwight Dyke

Small jigs, minnow-imitations and live bait work well for sauger. Like walleye, sauger spend the majority of their time along the bottom.

Huntley Meadows



An Oasis in Suburbia

Park



by King Montgomery

“Suzanne, do you have a list of the flora and fauna that live in the park?” I asked Fairfax County naturalist Suzanne Malone, who was helping me research this article. In a few minutes, she handed me a sheaf of papers more than a quarter-inch thick. I knew then I had found a treasure trove, all the more special because of its suburban location. Huntley Meadows Park, 1,424 pristine wetland acres located in Fairfax County’s Hybla Valley between Alexandria and Springfield, is a unique wildlife habitat surrounded by a large metropolitan area and a whole lot of people. An oasis in suburbia, it offers wildlife-watching opportunities, a place to enjoy the outdoors, and a sense of tranquility that I find perhaps its most distinguishing feature.

I thumbed through the long list of plants and creatures. The park contains over 200 species of birds including shorebirds and waterfowl, 69 species of butterflies, 22 kinds of

growing anticipation, I checked my stock of film as I walked from the Visitors Center on the forest trail leading to the marsh.

A white-tailed doe and her two fawns stood alert but unruffled, about 20 feet off the trail; they were accustomed to people and didn’t panic. The cool, shaded forest soon opened to a sunlit entrance to a watery wonderland. The wide dirt path changed to a pressure-treated wooden walkway that would lead over more than a half mile of beaver marsh, the heart of Huntley Meadows Park. Built to keep people from trampling the fragile marsh, the walkway blends harmoniously with the natural surroundings.

The History

Not far from the main park entrance stands Huntley House, a modest structure built in 1825 by Francis Mason, a grandson of George Mason, the Revolutionary War patriot from Virginia. The house, probably used as a weekend



A boardwalk guides visitors over a half mile of fragile marsh and wetlands. Inhabitants like these mallard hatchlings make wildlife watching outstanding.

dragonflies and eight types of damselflies, 34 different mammal species, 30 varieties of reptiles and amphibians, 23 species of fish, and countless types of insects. With

or summer retreat, overlooked a 2,000-acre plantation, much of which is now Huntley Meadows Park.

The Huntley Estate, like most of

bia



Northern Virginia at the time, remained in Union hands during the Civil War. In the winter of 1861, troops of the 3rd Michigan Infantry camped on the meadows and the Huntley House served as their headquarters.

After the United States government acquired the land in the 1940s, the Bureau of Public Roads used the site to test asphalt road surfaces. In the 1950s, the Virginia National Guard deployed anti-aircraft batteries across the property, and the 1960s saw the land occupied by fields of classified radio antennas belonging to the U.S. Navy. In 1970, the federal government declared the acreage surplus and, under the Land-for-Parks program, ceded it to Fairfax County in 1975. The Fairfax County Park Authority purchased another 163 acres and the current boundaries of Huntley Meadows Park were formed.

Huntley Meadows is a low wetland created by an old meander of the tidal Potomac River. It is maintained as a marsh by the engineering activities of resident beavers who dam small brooks that flow into Little Hunting and Dogue Creeks, both tributaries of the tidal Potomac River. Beaver dams dot the watery landscape, providing look-out vantages for the egrets and herons, and beaver-watching spots for visitors at dawn and dusk. Fertile waters and lush vegetation provide the habitat that sustains this wetlands ecosystem and the many creatures, great and small, that comprise it.

Habitat & Inhabitants

The first thing that catches your eye when you reach the marsh is its sheer expanse; so much so, in fact, that you have to focus and break up

(Left) Great blue heron.

(Right) Each year the staff and volunteers at Huntley Meadows Park offer to the public hundreds of programs, which look at the plants and animals that call this 1,424-acre park home.



Huntley Meadows Park is located in Alexandria, Virginia.

Directions: Capital Beltway Exit 1 (Richmond Hwy., Route 1) south 3.5 miles to right at Lockheed Blvd., 0.5 miles to the park entrance on the left at Harrison Lane.

the panorama into bite-size tableaus. What you see first will likely depend on your preferences. Beaver lodges, stained white from bird guano, provide fishing platforms for herons, white egrets, and other predators. Mallards swim nearby, usually in mating pairs, looking for tasty aquatic plants, which abound in the rich marsh. Canada geese paddle along in the water or graze along the marshy shore, their limber necks moving at a frenetic speed as their beaks peck at the ground.

Huntley Meadows Park is a bird-watching paradise. Binoculars or spotting scope in hand, birders discover woodland songbirds, wood-

peckers, and flickers. Numerous shorebirds and fish-eaters add to the variety, joined by raptors, such as bald eagles, osprey and red-tailed hawks. Hummingbirds visit the spring and summer wildflowers and tree blossoms, and waterfowl of many kinds reside here year-round or stop in for extended visits.

During my excursions to the park last year, from summer through winter, one individual bird consistently stole the show and my heart. A young blue heron, born in the spring, looks awkward and gangly, but has a teenage charm the more statuesque adults lack. He walks slowly away if you approach too closely, but in general shows little



©Dwight Dyke

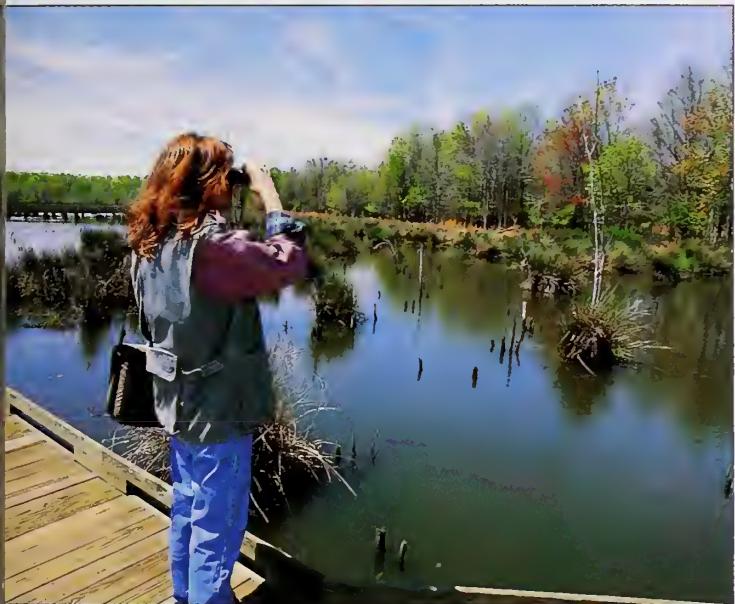


Swallowtail butterflies, green bullfrogs and plants like the elegant bright red cardinal flower can be seen on many of the outdoor trails. Inside the visitors' center, (far right) the park offers lectures, seminars, interactive displays and slides shows throughout the year.

Butterflies, Cardinal flower and background photo ©King Montgomery. Remaining photos ©Dwight Dyke.

fear of people, a trait I hope does not harm him later in life. Hank Heron, as I named him, often stands or sits near the boardwalk, fishing, contemplating the marsh, and watching the visitors come and go. It's hard to tell who is on display.

Hank does not stay at Huntley Meadows because visitors feed him, which is strictly against the rules. He just seems to like the place. An accomplished fish-catcher, he's a pleasure to watch when he's on the prowl. Perhaps the easy fishing and the mild winter have kept him in the only home he's ever known.



If you are looking for an urban outdoor experience, Huntley Meadows Park is outstanding. ©Dwight Dyke.

You can get to know the park's birds either by yourself, or with others. Larry Cartwright, a resident of nearby Arlington, is a serious birder who leads birdwatching and nature walks in Huntley Meadows and other county, regional, and state parks in Northern Virginia. He is an active member of The Friends of Huntley Meadows, a group of over 400 volunteers dedicated to protecting and preserving the park, and educating the public about this unique ecological phenomenon. Larry says Huntley Meadows is one of the most unique bird environments in Northern Virginia, particularly for marsh

birds. It is a great place to escape from the daily travails of city living; nature is always good for the soul.

Flora

I am particularly fond of wildflowers and Huntley Meadows Park is full of their colorful blossoms from spring through fall. Over 320 species have been identified, from the common yellow dandelion to the elegant cardinal flower, bright red like Virginia's state bird. The flowers attract nectar-eating birds and insects, and beauty-loving visitors as well. Many trees also bring their share of scent and color to the park, from the wispy pink mimosa to the flowering dogwoods; those without their own blooms may be adorned with flowering vines like the trumpet creeper with its waxy, orange trumpet-shaped flowers.

The park contains over 100 species of trees, shrubs, and woody vines. Alive, they provide food and shelter for a myriad of animals and insects. They convert carbon dioxide to pure oxygen as part of the photosynthesis process, a real gift for us as air pollution builds in Northern Virginia. The roots of the plants, shrubs, and trees help bind the soil and prevent erosion. Dead trees are left standing or lying on the forest or swamp floor, where they remain part of the ecosystem by providing homes for birds and other animals, and food for insects. And, as they decompose, the trees return vital nutrients to the soil and water, helping continue the cycle of life.

Facilities & Programs

The main entrance to Huntley Meadows Park off Lockheed Boule-

vard, leads to the Visitors Center and the marsh boardwalk. A second entrance, off Telegraph Road and South Kings Highway, takes you on a wooded and meadow trail to a marsh overlook, but does not connect with the main route. The Visitors Center blends in tastefully with Huntley Meadows Park. Start your visit here by looking at the informative and interactive displays. Choose from the many interesting brochures that map the paths and identify the various flora and fauna. The park also holds lectures, seminars, and slide shows in the classroom and auditorium. Or step outside and join one of the nature walks conducted by a park naturalist or by one of the volunteers from The Friends of Huntley Meadows. The wide, well-cared-for paths and boardwalks also make the park wheelchair accessible.

Each year there are hundreds of programs scheduled for the public and groups. For more information, to receive a calendar of events at the park, to make a reservation for one of the programs, or to get information about The Friends of Huntley Meadows Park, call (703) 768-2525. Huntley Meadows Park is at 3701 Lockheed Boulevard, Alexandria, VA 22306. The Visitors Center is closed on Thanksgiving, Christmas and New Years Day. Hours vary according to season. You may visit the park every day of the year from dawn to dark. For a good overview of the park and other sites of the Fairfax County Park Authority, see the website at www.fairfax.va.us/parks/huntley.htm. You won't find any commercial facilities here. There are no canoes or float tubes to rent, no hot dog stands, and no video games. The people who visit here find ample fascination in all nature has to offer, and they move quietly to preserve the hush. A much-needed oasis in suburbia is all here for you to enjoy. □

When he's not fishing or writing about it, King Montgomery likes to explore the outdoors and capture its beauty on film. A frequent contributor to Virginia Wildlife, he lives in Annandale.

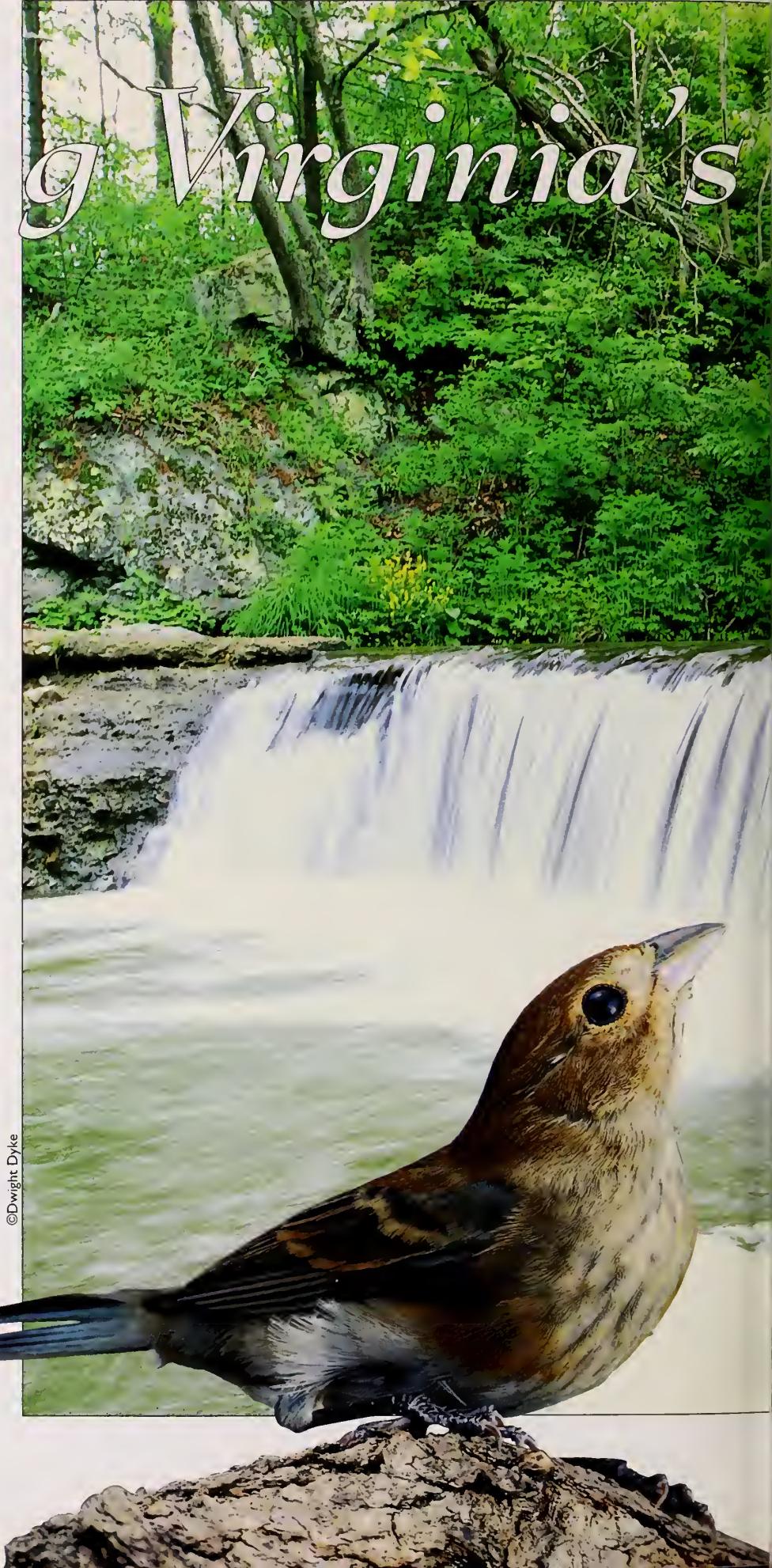
Birding Virginia's

*What do you get when
you mix a boat, a pair of
binoculars and water?
A great way to get close
to wildlife.*

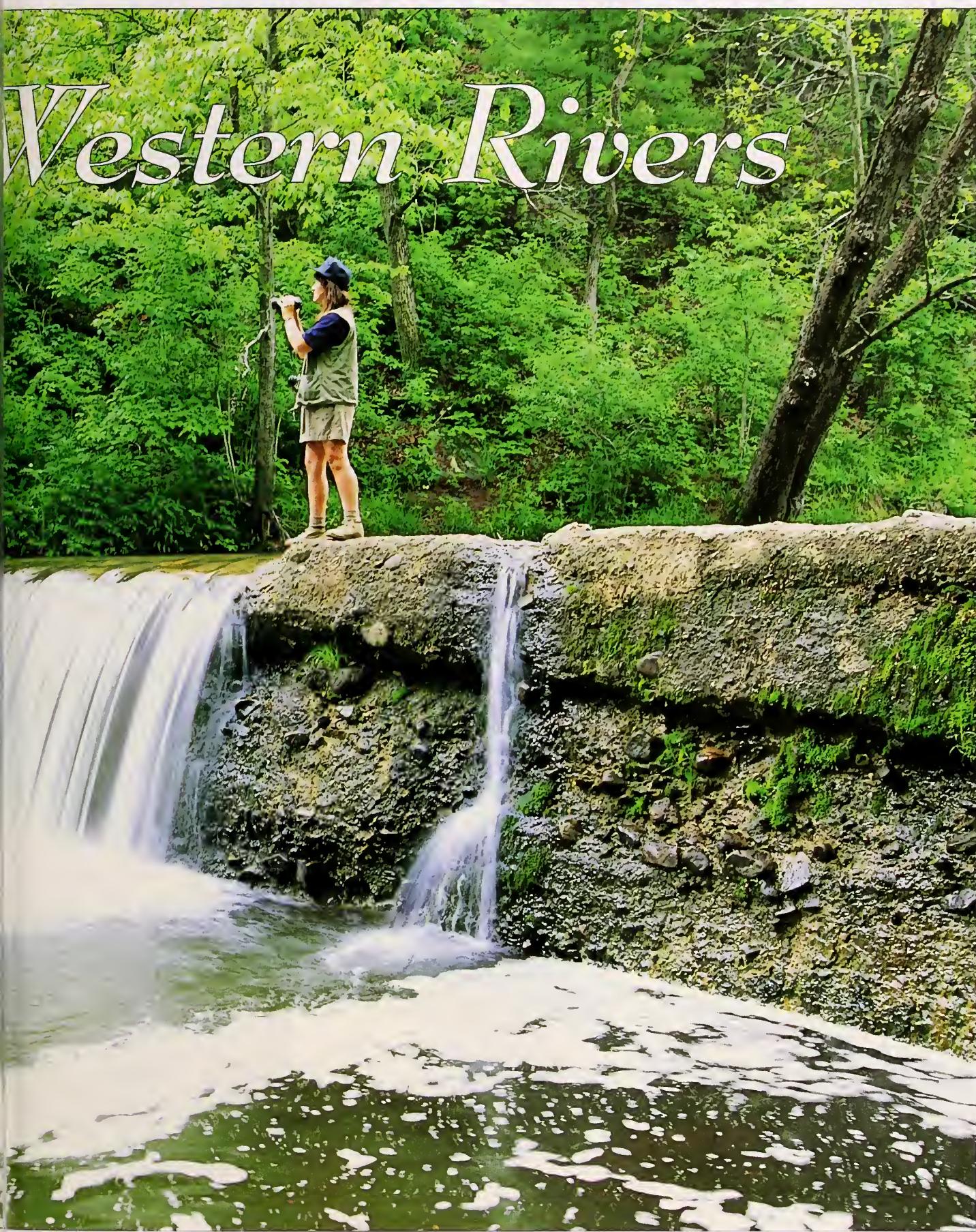
by Bruce Ingram

As my wife Elaine and I toted our canoe down to the upper James just before dawn, we paused to listen to the sounds of the night birds commingling with those of the day. On the far bank, a screech owl was whistling its eerie melody while a nearby whip-poor-will was chanting its name a dozen times or so. On our side of the river, the Carolina wren was already belting out its "tea-kettle, tea-kettle, tea-kettle," and a tufted titmouse soon joined in, urging listeners to look for "Peter, Peter, Peter." Soon afterwards, I recognized the notes of a goldfinch, wood thrush, and Louisiana waterthrush. During our day on the James, my spouse and I either saw or heard some two dozen species of avians.

This female indigo bunting is only one of the many species of birds found along the streams and rivers of western Virginia. ©Rob Simpson.



Western Rivers





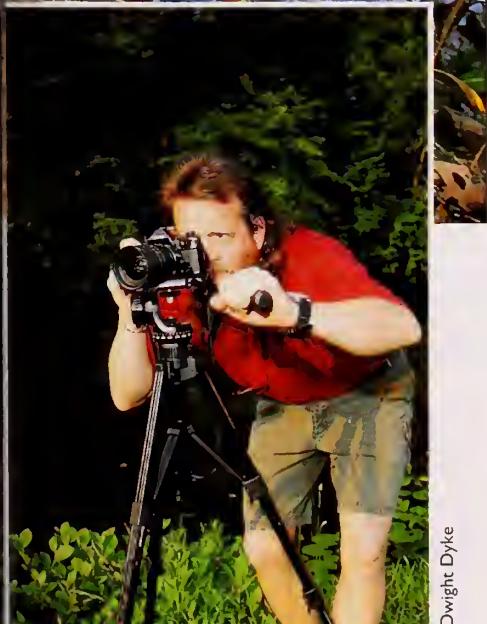
Like many Virginians, I enjoy the traditional bird watching junkets to forests, fields, and mountain peaks. But for the past decade or so, I have combined two of my favorite outdoor pursuits, river smallmouth fishing and canoeing, with bird watching to further enrich the time I spend on western Virginia streams, such as the James, New, Rappahannock, Shenandoah, Maury and others.

How to Bird an Upland River

Numerous kinds of habitat will attract birds on an upland river, but among the most reliable are pools or large eddies, water willow beds, sycamore or silver maple shrouded banks, tributaries, and transition habitats. Mallards, wood ducks, and Canada geese frequent pools and

According to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, wildlife watching is one of the fastest growing outdoor activities in the U.S.

large eddies, particularly if they are adjacent to bends or curves in a stream. For example, when your canoe approaches an outside bend, maneuver close to the bank and cease paddling. As you drift slowly, you may be awarded with a glimpse of a mother woody and her young feeding along the shoreline.



©Dwight Dyke

A water willow bed is another oasis for wildlife. Great blue herons and green herons stalk the edge of this habitat, just as smallmouth bass and sunfish cruise the adjacent water—all looking for minnows, sculpins, crayfish, and any hapless terrestrial creature that has blundered into the water. Red-winged blackbirds and common grackles often forage in the middle of these beds.

A bank lined with sycamores, silver maples, ironwood, and other trees is perhaps my favorite place on a river to bird. The bird I look most forward to hearing is an orchard oriole. Listen for his warbling “look here, what cheer” and other notes, and look for his chestnut-colored body and black head as he flits high in the tree tops. Other birds to listen for include eastern wood pewees, hooded warblers, and yellow-throated vireos. Belted kingfishers will often perch on dead limbs that extend over the water.

Where a small stream or spring enters a river is another marvelous place to bird. I often hear Louisiana waterthrushes at such places as well as Acadian flycatchers and yellow warblers. For sheer numbers of birds, transition zones on rivers are hard to beat. Watch for places where mature forest borders a pasture, cut-over, or overgrown field. Among the avians you may see or hear include blue-gray gnatcatchers, yellow-billed cuckoos, common yellowthroats, indigo buntings, yellow-breasted chats, and white-eyed vireos. The latter’s “chip-weao-chip” is a much anticipated song when I paddle near a field edge as are the insane rantings, croaks, and whistles of the chat.

Where to Go Options

Splendid birding can take place on Virginia’s western rivers whether they flow through rural areas or cities. For instance, this past summer I took canoe birding excursions to several places, among them the pastoral upper New River along the North Carolina line and the James in



©Rob Simpson



©Rob Simpson



©Rob Simpson

(Top) White-eyed vireo, yellow-throated warbler (middle), and a boldly marked male wood duck (bottom) with two lesser-colored females on either side.

the Lynchburg area. Jay Reid, who operates RiverCamp USA on the upper New, told me that this section of the stream is known for its population of warbling vireos, and birders often visit just for that species. One summer, five eagles set up shop along the waterway. Ospreys are another much anticipated sighting.

Reid says 22 miles of the New from where the North and South Forks meet to Independence is a bird watcher's paradise. Forests, fields, pastures and scenic vistas characterize this section.

On my urban outing, I floated from Six-Mile Bridge in Lynchburg to Joshua Falls (4 miles) with James Noel, who operates James River Paddle Sports in Monroe. Although the sights and sounds of the Lynchburg area were a part of the itinerary, we tallied 21 species of birds—not bad for a late July afternoon.

Noel relates that the float we took and the one immediately upstream (a 6-miler from the Blackwater Creek put-in to Six-Mile Bridge) are especially good ones to spot Canada geese, mallards, and wood ducks. A must-stop on the Blackwater Creek junket is the Percival's Island Nature Area where warblers, vireos, and various shorebirds are possible.

How many species of birds can you expect to encounter on a western Virginia river? On an early July trip down the James that my son and

I took with Bill Hunley of the Roanoke Valley Bird Club, we totaled 31. But on an April or May getaway, Hunley says spotting 60 to 70 different species is not unusual. Indeed, combining fishing, canoeing, and bird watching is a great way to spend a day on a Virginia river. □

Bruce Ingram is a high school teacher from Fincastle, VA. He is also a frequent contributor to Virginia Wildlife magazine and other wildlife and outdoor publications.

Binoculars for River Birding.

Bill Hunley maintains that selecting a pair of "river" binoculars is no easy task. "The more I bird, the more I think that less is better in terms of cost and size for binoculars," says the Roanoker. "If your canoe overturns or you drop your binoculars in the water, you'll be glad you went with an inexpensive pair. Since you will have to deal with the motion of

the canoe as well as the natural shakiness that everyone has when they hold binoculars, a lightweight pair with average magnification is best.

"A good choice is a pair like the Pentax Weather-Resistant Compact binoculars. They don't weigh much (11.6 ounces), and their power (8x24) is about right for river birding."

Quality, weather resistant binoculars usually run around \$130. If you opt for a well-made waterproof pair, you may have to spend \$500 or more.

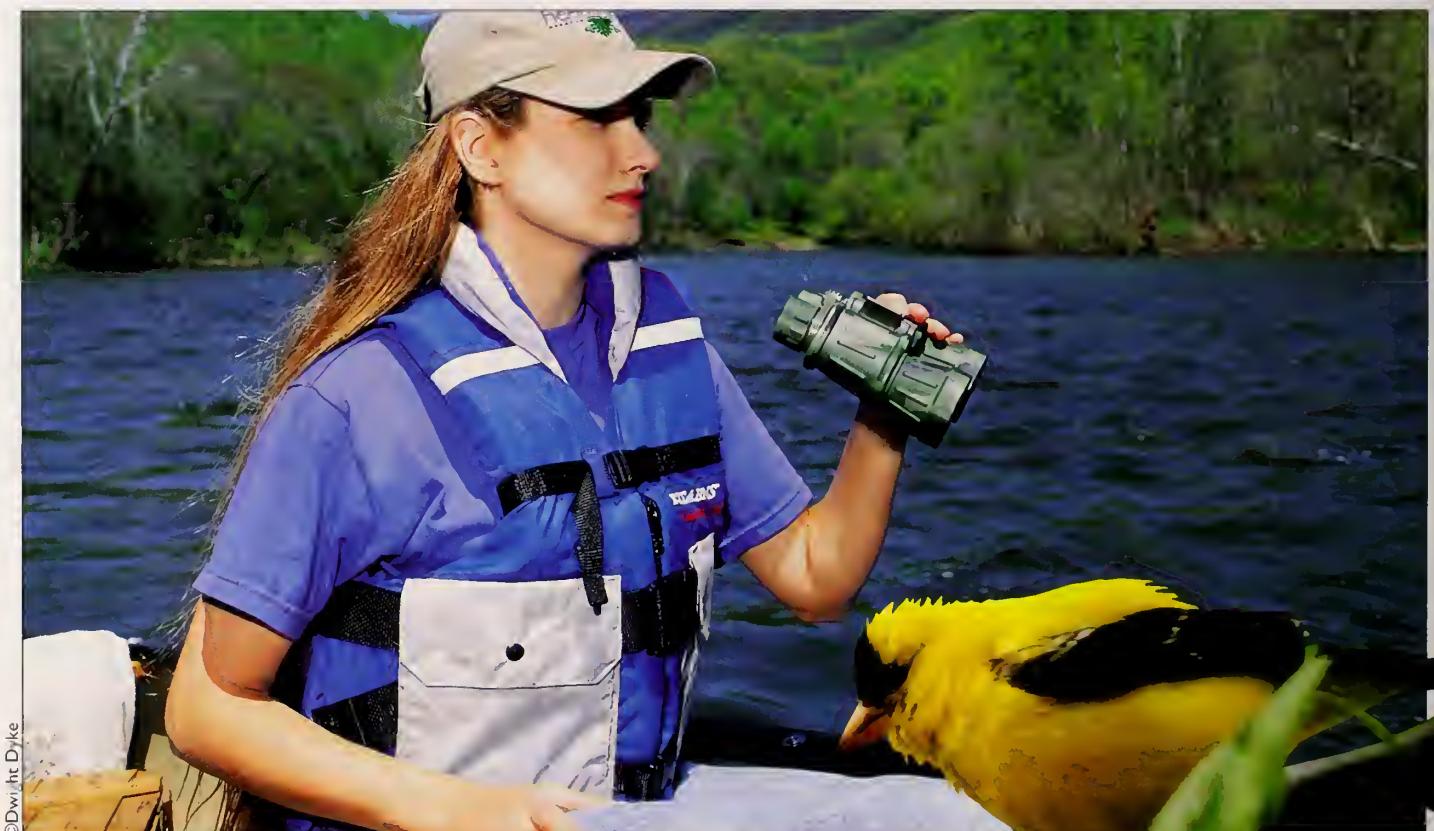
Contacts

James River Paddle Sports:
804-384-3636.

New River Canoe & Campground:
540-773-3905.

RiverCamp USA: 800-748-3722.

The Virginia Society of Ornithology sells lists of birds found in the state. For a lot of 10, send \$1.50 and a stamped, self-addressed envelope to the VSO, 1230 Viewpoint Dr., Evington, VA 24550 (804-821-1136).



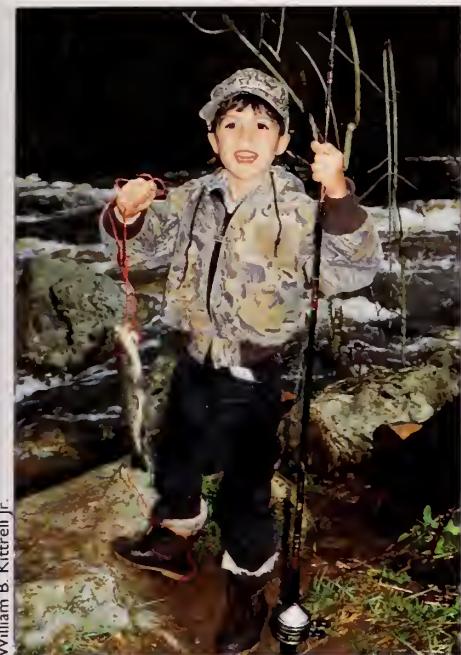
©Dwight Dyke

A good pair of binoculars will help you to see the brilliant colors in many birds like the American goldfinch. ©Dwight Dyke.



Yes, Virginia,
there is an Opening Day!





William B. Kitrell Jr.

The Department's Pay-As-You-Go Trout Fishing program is luring anglers from around the state.

by George Duckwall

Are you one of the trout anglers who wistfully remembers March 16, 1995 as the last official "opening day" of trout season in Virginia? Would you believe that Virginia has had four "opening days" for trout every year since that date?

A survey of licensed Virginia trout anglers in 1993 revealed that an overwhelming majority (approximately 75 percent) favored the elimination of "opening day" with a switch to a year-round season and stocking of catchable trout from Oc-

(Left) Big Tumbling Creek at Clinch Mountain Wildlife Management Area is famous for producing hefty stringers of great eating trout.

tober through May. Because most put-n-take waters do not support trout in the summer months, trout are stocked in these waters between October and the end of the following May. Consequently, there is no longer a "season" for trout, and "opening day" is no longer a statewide event. Fall and early winter stocking now accounts for between 20 and 25 percent of the trout production. Fortunately for those anglers who look forward to an opening day, they can still enjoy their sport in the fashion that they find most attractive.

Each year three fee fishing areas (Douthat Lake, Crooked Creek and Big Tumbling Creek) managed by the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries have an "opening day." Each spring on the first Saturday in

What is a Fee Fishing Area?

The fee fishing areas are stocked with catchable trout, just like the designated stocked trout waters managed by the Department. They differ from the designated stocked trout waters in that a \$4.00 daily use permit is needed in addition to a regular fishing license to fish at a fee area. You do not need the \$12.50 trout license to fish these areas during the fee fishing season. The permit to fish in these waters is available only through the concession operation located at the specific area. You will need the \$12.50 trout license to fish during the non-fee permit period.

At Douthat Lake the season starts the first Saturday in April and runs



(Above) A children-only area has been established on Wilson Creek, just below the dam of Douthat Lake. This area has been designed to offer easy access and to encourage small children to participate.

April, over 1,500 anglers have an opportunity to fish for 12,500 trout stocked in these three fee fishing areas. If you are the type of angler who likes "opening day," announced trout stockings, and enjoys people, then the Department's fee fishing areas are tailor-made for you.

through October 31. At Crooked Creek and at Big Tumbling Creek at Clinch Mountain, the fee fishing season runs from the first Saturday in April through September 30.

No fishing of any kind is allowed at these areas during the five days immediately preceding "opening day."

Why Fish in a Fee Area?

For starters, if you like "opening day," you'll like the fee areas. On the first Saturday in April, "opening day" begins at 9:00 a.m. This gives people time to get to the area from long distances, purchase their permit, pick their spot and get ready for the opening...just like "opening days" of the past.

With the exception of Douthat Lake and Wilson Creek Fee Area, the fee waters are stocked daily (except Sunday) and the stocking schedule is posted at the concession building. Douthat Lake and Wilson Creek Fee Area, in Douthat State Park, are stocked twice weekly after "opening day." This gives anglers not only an "opening day" with large numbers of trout concentrated in the receiving waters, but announced stockings for the balance of the fee season as well. The fee areas are stocked with trout averaging 9-11 inches, as in our designated stocked trout waters.

The permit allows the angler to take six trout on the day it is issued, from the fee water it is issued for. A separate permit is required each day. Surplus brood fish are stocked along with the normal catchable size trout

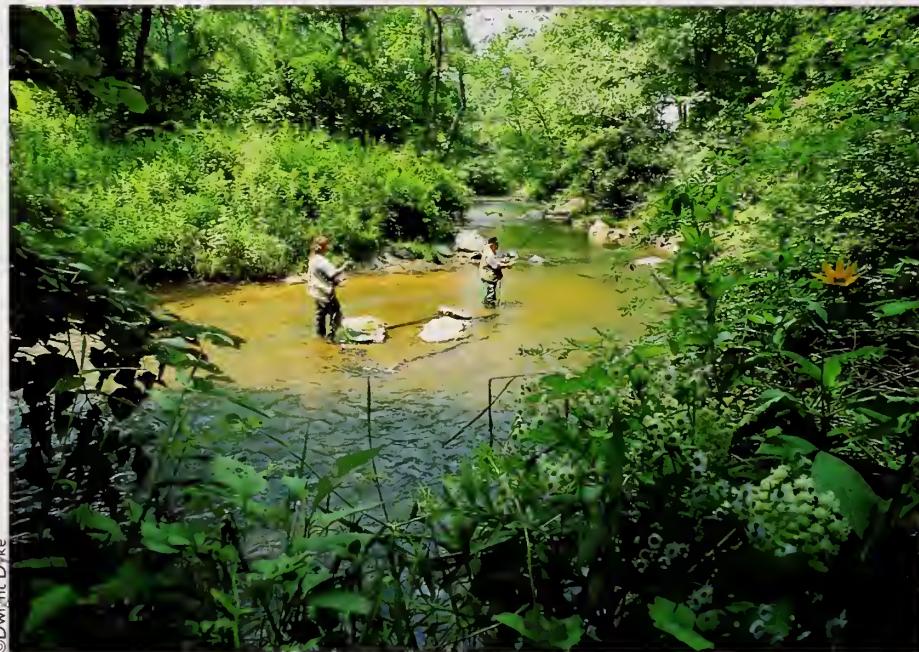
to increase the quality of the fishery and provide trophies for lucky anglers. The pictures of some of these fish taped to the windows at the concession stands attest to the good fortune some of the anglers have experienced. In addition, wild trout in tributary streams and holdover trout, particularly in Crooked Creek and in Big Tumbling Creek, offer an additional opportunity for anglers.

Another advantage to the fee areas is the amenities that might not be found in close proximity to the Designated Stocked Trout Waters. The concession stands, in addition to the permits and trip licenses, offer fishing tackle, bait and refreshments. You can fish the permitted water in the morning, have your lunch at the concession stand right along the water, purchase some more tackle if needed, and go back to fishing without having to leave the area. In addition, you can talk to the people who know how the fish have been biting, what lures or baits are hot, and whether the size of the fish you've been catching is typical for recent stockings. If you should happen to land one of the surplus breeders in Big Tumbling Creek, don't forget to ask to have your picture proudly displayed on the "big fish bulletin board."



©Dwight Dyke

(Left) Crooked Creek in Carroll County is only five miles east of Galax and is a wide, low gradient stream, which makes it excellent for wading. (Above) Sixty-acre Douthat Lake offers anglers the opportunity to fish for trout and also provides fishing for bass, bluegill, pickerel and catfish.



©Dwight Dyke

Douthat State Park offers camping and cabins for anglers and families who wish to stay overnight and Clinch Mt. has a primitive camping area. Private camping facilities are also located near each of the fee fishing areas.

An attractive feature of the Department's fee fishing areas is that each offers a different type of angling. The fee area at Douthat State Park offers small mountain lake trout fishing in the 60-acre Douthat Lake, as well as low gradient moun-

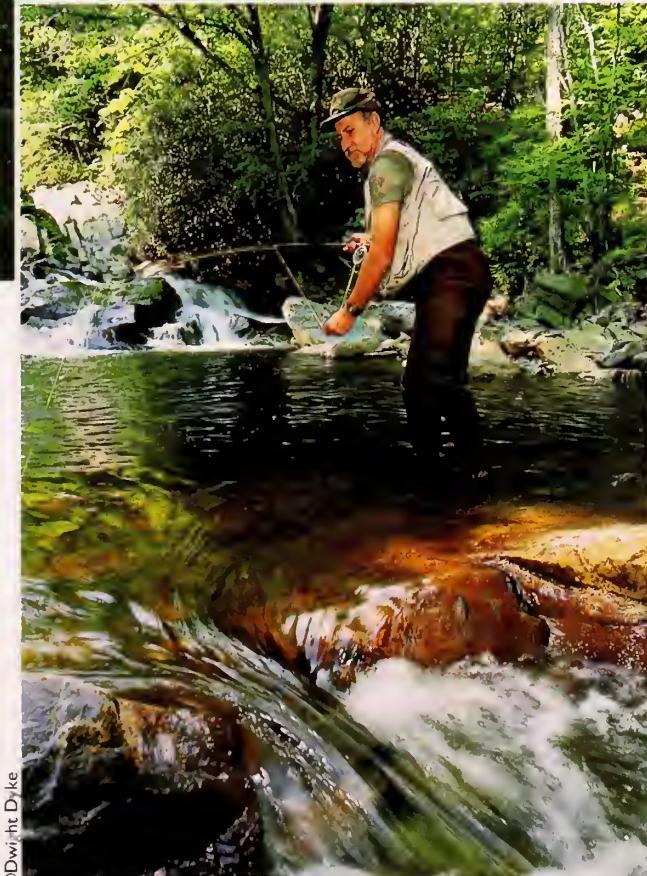
How to Get There

The most northerly of the three areas is Douthat Lake State Park. The park is located west of Lexington off I-64 at exit 27, about 7 miles north of Clifton Forge, on Route 629. Permits can be purchased at the concession stand in the park restaurant on the shore of the lake. Fee permits are required for the Douthat Fee area from the first Saturday in April until October 31.

Crooked Creek Fee Area is in Carroll County between Hillsdale and Galax. From Galax, take Rt. 58 east to Woodlawn; then take Rt. 620 south approximately 4.0 miles to the Crooked Creek Wildlife Management Area. Permits can be purchased at the concession stand at the area. Permits are required from the first Saturday in April through September 30.

Big Tumbling Creek is located on the Clinch Mt. Wildlife Management Area in Washington County. From Saltville, turn left off Rt. 107 onto Rt. 91 (1/4 mile); then right onto Rt. 634; bear left onto Rt. 613 and proceed 3.5 miles to Rt. 747, turn right and proceed to concession stand at the area to purchase your permit. Permits are required from the first Saturday in April through September 30.

If you're looking for announced trout stockings, lots of catchable trout, and a place to make some great memories, then look no further than the Department's fee fishing areas. □



Big Tumbling Creek, located about seven miles west of Saltville, is a large, steep gradient stream with numerous small waterfalls.

©Dwight Dye

tain stream fishing in approximately 4 miles of Wilson Creek featuring riffles and pools. A "children's only" area is set aside at Douthat and children under 12 can fish without a permit in the entire area if they are under the direct supervision of a permitted adult. The combined number of trout creelied by the adult and the child or children must not exceed six. Crooked Creek Fee Area, in Carroll County, offers a scenic winding stream about 3.5 miles in length in the foothills of the Blue Ridge. This low gradient stream featuring pools and riffles and undercut banks provides excellent holding habitat for trout. Big Tumbling Creek Fee Area consists of a 3-mile medium to high gradient mountain stream with some pools, large boulders and waterfalls.





Journal

Virginia Outdoor Writers Name Member Contest Winners

The Virginia Outdoor Writer's Association (VOWA) announced the winners of the "Excellence in Craft" contest and Youth Writing Competition for 1998 at their annual business meeting this past March. In the "Excellence in Craft" category first place went to Deane and Garvey Winegar, for their book, *Highroad Guide to the Virginia Mountains*, which was reviewed in *Virginia Wildlife* magazine, May, 1999. Lynda Richardson took second place for her cover photo on fresh water mussels for the January 1998 issue of *Smithsonian* magazine. Third place went to Peter Ring, for illustrations in the book, *Why Dogs Do That*.

In the "Youth Writing Competition," Dominic Schuler, of Vienna, VA, who attends James Madison High School, took first place for his article "Wildlife Tracking" (story follows). Second place went to Allison Claire Jones, Home School, Pilot, VA and third place to Jenny Reeves, of Lynchburg, VA, who attends Brookville High School.

VOWA is an organization of writers, editors, photographers, artists, filmmakers, videographers, public affairs officers, and lecturers. Corporate and sponsor support for the 1998 award winners included plaques and merchandise from Bushnell, Plano Molding Tackle, Cabelas Inc., Mann's Bait Company, Stren, Remington, Pradco, Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries, Hunters for the Hungry and others.

Wildlife Tracking by Dominic Schuler

Wildlife tracking has always been a favorite pastime of mine. During sixth grade my friend Greg and I were especially acute trackers. We would search for signs of raccoons, foxes, and possibly even turkey. The best part was that we were very talented trackers. We learned to be almost invisible in the woods. Our footsteps were unheard, our scents not smelled, and outlines unseen.

We came home from school one day, dropped off our books, and headed straight for the woods. It was mid-December but still no snow had fallen. The first thing to do was to look for any traces of wildlife, such as tracks or droppings. A small clearing lay ahead of us, and a deer rub on a small oak tree was distinctly visible. We had traced many doe and fawns before, but never any bucks. The only way to determine if deer were still in the area was to search for any other signs. The ground was extremely dry which left us without the help of footprints. However, luck was smiling on us that day because we found a small pile of droppings in the grass. Greg bent down and felt it. It was still warm.

We faced another dilemma, the direction the deer went. Experience led us to believe that they might have headed towards a small creek. When we were making our way through the woods we discovered tracks. They were not actual prints but leaves that had been dragged by deer hooves. There were many tracks which were all leading the same way. We had never gone that way before because we usually

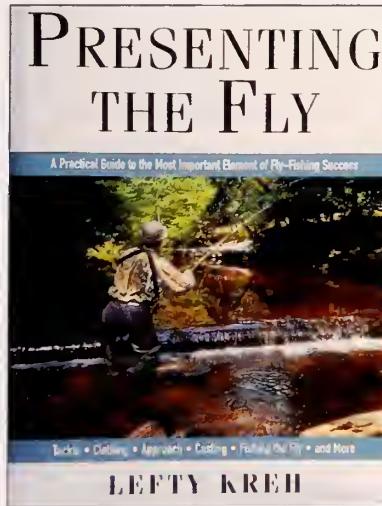
stuck to the creek. Since we were both explorers as well as trackers we found no reason not to pursue the deer. The tracks led down into a ravine and up the other side. Knowledge of the woods and animals forced us to get down on our stomachs and crawl so as not to spook anything on the other side. Nearing the top, I remember the adrenaline pumping through my veins and only my greatest dreams could have prepared me for what I was about to see. Our vision crept over the peak of the ravine wall.

The deer were as thick as raspberry briars in early spring. Bucks lined the outer layer of the herd while doe and fawns filled the middle. It was just like a National Geographic documentary. The bucks snorted and stomped trying to intimidate each other. We tried to count how many were in the herd, but only reached 42 when a gust of wind came from behind us. We attempted to keep still but they had already caught our scent. They ran like a flock of birds, turning into the thick brush and evergreens.

Still in awe, Greg and I laid there for what seemed like an eternity. Finally, we got up and started home. We talked endlessly about the sight we had just seen. Thinking the day could not get any better we stumbled across a pair of antlers that a buck had shed the year before.

Throughout our sixth grade and somewhat into seventh we continued our tracking efforts, but never saw the herd in its entirety again. Other activities began to take up more of our time and the herd seemed to disappear, most likely due to the construction of new housing developments and deforestation.

tion. Now I see deer in my backyard eating from our garden, running through developments, and worst of all, dead on the side of the road. Every time I see a deer, I remember the great wildlife experience that Greg and I shared. □



For Fly-Fishing Success

reviewed by King Montgomery

Presenting the Fly—A Practical Guide to the Most Important Element of Fly Fishing Success, by Lefty Kreh.

The old cliche about "the only book you'll ever need to do so-and-so," certainly applies in the case of Lefty's new book. This work, according to Trey Combs, "takes our sport into the 21st century."

Lefty argues convincingly you can own the most expensive fly rod, have the finest line on a precision-crafted reel, tie on the fly that will be struck as soon as it hits the water, and make the longest tight-loop cast imaginable, and not catch a thing unless your presentation is proper. And "presentation"—getting the fly to the fish in a manner that increases the chances of the fish biting it—is what this book is all about.

Almost all facets of fly fishing contribute to presentation, and Lefty, in his inimitable style, relays a wealth of knowledge to the reader that will enhance your presentation. Some of the areas covered in the book include: what tackle to use; which shape, size, weight, and color

of fly to use under different conditions; the best knots; the most efficient cast and mends; and the superior approach so fish aren't spooked; and the like. He also provides very helpful hints on how to angle for trout; the warmwater game species; and saltwater fishes. From spooky, clear-water trout, to largemouth bass in the pads, to wary bonefish on the pristine flats, Lefty covers it all thoroughly and in his usual entertaining fashion. Here are a few examples of Lefty's wisdom:

"Know which direction your fish is facing before you make a cast then cast to the eating end."

"Make as few false casts as possible. One sure sign of a good fly fisherman is how few false casts he makes."

"Many anglers practice casting for greater distance, when they should first consider accuracy."

By applying what you learn from Lefty Kreh, you will be able to present the right fly at the right time and place to our wild mountain brook trout, to our wily browns and rainbows, to small- and largemouth bass, and to a host of saltwater fish that call the Old Dominion home.

C. Boyd Pfeiffer says the book "is Lefty's best ever, destined to be a classic and the best book available to make you a better all-around fly fisherman." I couldn't have said it better.

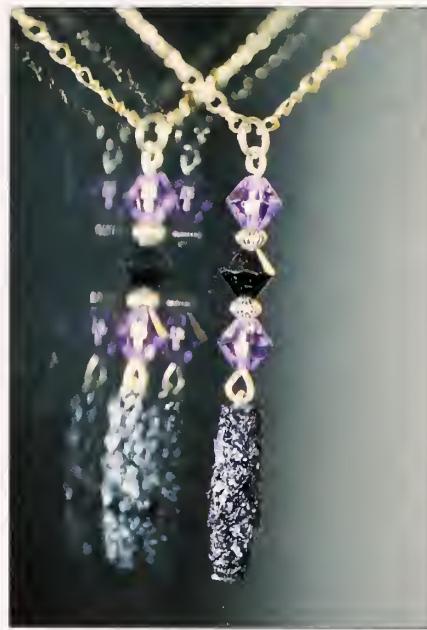
For more information, contact the Lyons Press, 123 West 18th Street, New York, NY 10011 or call them at (212) 620-9580. You may also order this book, and others from the Lyons Press, on www.amazon.com and www.barnesandnoble.com. □

Caddis Case Jewelry

by King Montgomery

Kathy and Ben Stout graduated from Virginia Tech in Blacksburg. He's a research biologist and college professor, and her degree is in wildlife biology. Now, in addition to everything else, including raising two children, the Stouts own Wild-Scape, Inc., a family company that raises caddisflies to make jewelry.

Actually the Stouts raise caddis-



Caddis case jewelry is created with the help of caddisfly larvae.

fly larvae in a simulated stream environment and provide them with fragments of gems and minerals ranging from gold, garnet and malachite, to coal, pyrite and abalone shell. The caddis gather the small bits of material, cement them into a cylindrical case, and live in them on the stream bottom for awhile. When they emerge, they swim to the water's surface, and fly off as adult caddisflies that trout fly anglers know so well. The caddisflies' unique cases, now festooned with pieces of the gems and minerals, are made into jewelry such as necklaces, bracelets, pins, brooches and tie tacks; and they are gorgeous. The cases for this species of caddisfly, the great brown autumn sedge, are about 3/4 inch long. The insect is not harmed in this interesting process.

For more information or to request a catalog, call Kathy and Ben at (304) 232-4156 or visit their Web site at www.wildscape.com.

A Splash in Time

by Sarah White

The sky was pristine as Rick Stallings scraped the frost off his windshield. It was one of those cool and flawless early fall mornings that remind us why we love living in Vir-

ginia. The drive to Shenandoah National Park was filled not with the jabber of the radio but with an inner seeing of the streams he planned to fish; the kind of meditation that comes only when years of familiarity and respect have flowered into love and knowledge.

After parking at the base of the Thornton River Trail and hiking about a mile in, Rick came to the first spot he planned to fish. A long dead Greek philosopher once said that a man could never step into the same river twice, and, as Rick discovered that morning, that old sage knew his stuff. A beaver dam that had caused a large and fertile pool had been swept away and had taken most of the brookies with it; Rick's efforts there were futile.

After fishing some other familiar streams and pulling out several small fish; he came upon a pool he had never tried before. After several unsuccessful casts came a powerful hit; one of the hardest he had ever felt. As he struck the fish and played it, Rick knew it was a big one. As he caught his first glimpse of it his heart beat faster; it was an eastern brook trout, and a big one. Full of fight the brookie flipped out of the net and

onto the rocks by Rick's feet. As he knelt down to get the fish; pain shot through his leg. He had cut his shin on a shape outcrop of stone and would have a scar to remember this battle by.

Placing the trout in a small cooler partly full of water, Rick made his way back to the car. His first stop upon reaching civilization was the Exxon station in Sperryville where the fish was measured—almost 11 inches. The next stop was Graves Mountain Lodge where Jimmy Graves helped Rick by photographing the fish and getting him in touch with the game warden in Madison County.

The only stain on this near perfect experience was that Rick was unable to release the wonderful trout. But in a way, the fish lives on. You see, Rick has a friend name Joe Tomelleri who is a nationally known biologist and wildlife artist who specializes in fish. Joe would use the picture of the brookie to make a fantastic, limited-edition print, one of which would be donated to the Department of Game and Inland Fisheries. Such works of art help to raise awareness of the Eastern brook trout and the threats, such as loss of habitat that they face.

Thus one man's pleasure helped to ensure that others would be able to have the same joy in the future.

If you would like more information on how to obtain the Eastern Brook Trout print you can call Richard Stalling directly at (703) 860-1224. There is a limit of 600 signed and numbered copies. □



“Beyond BOW*” Workshop

August 27-29, 1999

Northern Virginia 4-H Center near
Front Royal, Virginia

(*Becoming an Outdoors-Woman)

This workshop is designed for participants to go beyond the basics and explore a single outdoor sport over three days.

Participants choose one of the following programs:

*Deer Hunting for Women
Turkey Hunting for Women
Caving Workshop for Women
Freshwater Fishing for Women*

Workshop space is limited.

For more information,
please contact:
Libby Norris,
VDGIF Region I Office,
5806 Mooretown Road,
Williamsburg, VA 23188
Phone: (757) 253-7072
E-mail: Lnorris@dgif.state.va.us



“Eastern Brook Trout” by Joe Tomelleri

RECIPES

by Joan Cone

An Enjoyable Shore Lunch

When planning a shore lunch, one thing you want is to have it as easy as possible. Try and prepare as much as you can before leaving home. Pack your items such as small utensils, condiments and staples in plastic bags. Unpacking and meal preparation will go more smoothly. Remember to take a cooler with ice for storing all perishable foods.

In many areas of Virginia, open fires are not permitted. For cooking, you'd be safer to carry a one or two burner camp stove. These work on propane, butane or liquid fuel.

The following menu calls for a chowder made with fish that you have just caught. Look below for an alternate main dish for use when fish fail to cooperate!

Menu

Manhattan Fish Stew Chowder

Hash Rounds

Skillet Cheese Biscuits

Granola Bars

Manhattan Fish Stew Chowder

1 pound of skinned fish fillets, cut into serving size pieces
1 can (10 1/2 ounces) cream of potato soup, undiluted
1 teaspoon onion powder
Salt and pepper to taste
1/4 teaspoon dried thyme
1 can (16 ounces) diced tomatoes
1 can (16 ounces) mixed vegetables

In a deep pot, add soup, seasonings and vegetables. Stir to blend thoroughly; add fish. Cook on camp stove only until mixture bubbles throughout and fish flakes easily.

Hash Rounds

1 tablespoon vegetable oil
1 can corned beef hash
2 teaspoons prepared mustard
4 slices tomato
Hot pepper sauce to taste
4 tablespoons grated cheese

Heat oil in skillet on camp stove. Remove corned beef hash in one piece by opening can at both ends. Cut into 4 rounds and place in hot oil. Cook over medium heat for 5 minutes before turning. Spread lightly with mustard and top with tomato slices. Sprinkle with hot pepper sauce and grated cheese. Cook for 5 minutes or until cheese is slightly melted. Makes 4 servings.

Skillet Cheese Biscuits

(You will need to take along a cutting board for kneading.)

2 cups biscuit mix
1/2 cup shredded Cheddar cheese
1/4 cup mashed potato flakes
2/3 cup beer or milk

Mix together biscuit mix, cheese and potato flakes. Make a well in center and add beer or milk all at once. Stir just until mixture holds together. Knead gently on a floured board 5 strokes. Pat into a 6 x 8-inch rectangle. Cut biscuits into 2-inch squares. Cook in a covered greased skillet 1 inch apart over low heat for 5 to 7 minutes on each side, or until biscuits are cooked through and lightly browned. Makes 12 biscuits.

Granola Bars

These bars, which you can prepare at home, make a perfect snack during any outdoor activity.

1/2 cup shortening
1/2 cup honey
1/2 cup brown sugar, packed
1 egg, well beaten
1 teaspoon vanilla
3/4 cup flour
1/2 teaspoon soda
1/2 teaspoon baking powder
1/4 teaspoon salt
2 cups granola

Preheat oven to 350°F. Cream shortening, honey and brown sugar until light and fluffy. Add egg and vanilla and beat well. Stir together flour, soda, baking powder and salt; add to creamed mixture. Stir in granola and spread in a 10 x 15-inch greased baking pan. Bake in oven for 25 to 30 minutes. When cool, cut into bars about 1 1/2 x 2 1/2 inches. Wrap in plastic, individually, for outings. Makes 32 bars. □





Photo Tips

by Lynda Richardson

My "Secret" Place

Dawn crested the distant ridge slowly reaching up and pulling itself into the pink sky. With binoculars, I scanned the meadow below, occasionally pausing over a mound of grass or boulder protruding coyly from the chaotic vegetation. I knew they were here. In fact, since the first time I had come to this place many years ago, they were always present; ageless, dependable creatures, living only slightly less harassed than most of their kind in other parts of the world.

As the sun rose I began to pick out the familiar shapes moving slowly along well traveled paths. Watching closely, I was able to pick out tiny, speckled fawns; the object of my morning foray.

I had come to my favorite place to photograph white-tailed deer. Big Meadows is somewhat centrally located within Shenandoah National Park, the only national park in Virginia. Around 75 miles long (121 kilometers) and 4 miles (6 kilometers) wide, Shenandoah National Park encompasses over 196,000 acres of hardwood forests which run along the crest of the northern Blue Ridge Mountains. Located in the northern part of the state, the park starts in Front Royal, ends at Rockfish Gap, and is bisected by Skyline Drive, a 105-mile (169 kilometer) hard road which allows visitors access to more than 500 miles (805 kilometers) of hiking trails including the Appalachian Trail.

Big Meadows is well-known for its whitetail and has been to many a favorite photography spot for years. It is one of the best places to photograph the daily and seasonal activities of these gentle and abundant creatures especially May/June for

fawns and November/December for the fall rut. One thing that makes Big Meadows particularly special is the animals tolerance of people. I have had does use me as a human shield when trying to escape amorous bucks. Deer have even accepted my presence at cud chewing sessions as they rested and nodded off in the forest surrounding the meadow.

In spite of all this agreeable coexistence, remember deer are wild animals and can still be dangerous when provoked or cornered. When on foot, I almost always photograph the Big Meadows deer with a 300 or



A doe and her fawn watch other deer move down the trail at Big Meadows. (500mm CANON f4.5 lense shot at 125th at f8.0. Fuji 50 film used.) ©Lynda Richardson

500mm lense. If you are careful, move cautiously and watch for any sign that the animal is distressed, you can sometimes get away with using a 100 or 200mm and still get really great photographs. Photographing from your car is another option. No matter what, always be considerate of your subject and never push your presence on an animal. We don't want to change their agreeable nature and ruin picture taking opportunities for others!

As for when the best time to pho-

tograph these deer, I recommend getting to Big Meadows before dawn. This will help you spot the animals early and be in position before anyone can disturb you and your subjects. As the park has around two million visitors annually, your best shooting of the day will be early morning. Late afternoon is great light but more people will be watching for critters in the evening.

If you would like to try your hand at photographing white-tailed deer Big Meadows is located at Milepost 51 on Skyline Drive which is approximately 51 miles south of Front Royal. At Big Meadows is the Byrd Visitor Center which is open April through October. Books, slides, postcards, posters, maps and other information about the park is sold in there by the Shenandoah Natural History Association. The Association will furnish a list of items and prices by phone (540-999-3582) or by mail, 3655 U.S. Hwy 211 East, Luray, VA, 22835-9051. There is a coffee shop at the center and nearby is a lodge, family campground, picnic tables and gas station. You can make reservations at the lodge by writing ARAMARK Virginia Sky-line Company, Inc., Box 727, Luray, VA 22835 or calling (800) 999-4714. For reservations at the campground, call (800) 365-2267.

For more information please call (540) 999-3500 (recording) or write to the Superintendent, Shenandoah National Park, 3655 U.S. Hwy 211 East, Luray, VA 22835-9051. □

Where's your "secret place"? Write to me at P.O. Box 8296, Richmond, VA 23226 or E-mail to: lr@lynda richardson.com.

June Afield

by Jack Randolph

Families with school-age children are probably the most aware of the meaning of June, because it's the month when the schools return the children to the family and their education continues along somewhat different lines.

June is the beginning of summer, a time when families can go on vacations or just take short afternoon trips together. It's a time for the kids to rediscover the natural world that exists in their yards or in nearby forests and wetlands. No longer do they have to visit nature via the television. Now they have the time to get out there and be part of it.

For fish and wildlife June is a month of creation and rejuvenation. Many species of fish are just recovering from the demands of the spawning season as lean, spent fish begin to take on weight in preparation for yet another winter. The young of small game and deer, learning to walk on their brand new feet, are just starting to learn the hard lessons of survival where the pass or fail system has been in effect since the beginning of time. Not only do the wildlife parents have to teach their young the art of survival, but human parents must continue to teach their offspring that young wildlife does best if left alone.

You must search out your freshwater fishing this month. It appears that, at long last, Virginia's anglers are beginning to learn the ways of the walleye and nowhere are those lessons being learned better than on Lake Anna.

On Anna I suspect that the key to breaking the walleye puzzle lies in the improved striped bass fishing. Anglers fishing deep for stripers

commenced to encounter walleyes and by and by some guides and anglers, such as Glen Briggs, learned to specialize in walleyes. Last year June was a good month on Lake Anna for both stripers and walleyes. It is likely that such walleye-rich

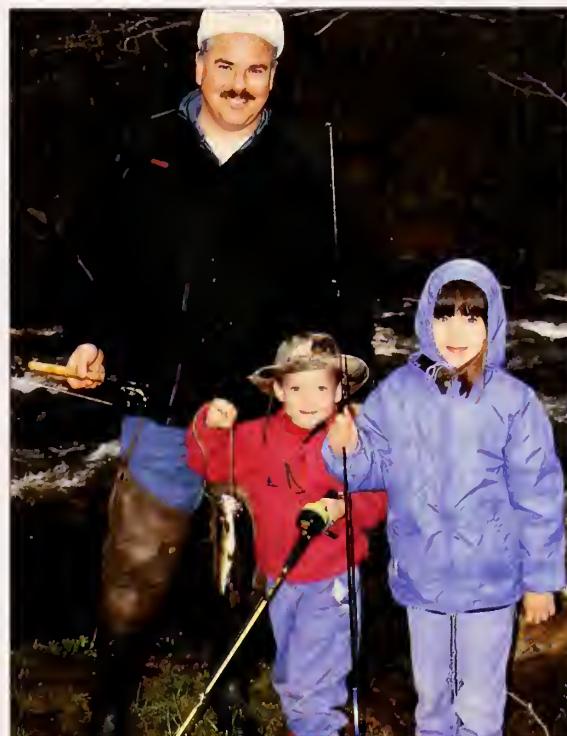
Dam in the short stretch of the Roanoke River between the dam and Lake Gaston. In the upper reaches of Buggs Island Lake there was some catfish action, involving some flatheads as large as 40 pounds.

If you like to fish for panfish it would be difficult to beat the great fishing for bluegills and shellcrackers in lakes Burnt Mills, Western Branch or Prince in Suffolk. Also in Suffolk, lakes Meade and Cohoon produce big, hefty bream. Super big bream are also available among the submerged forests on Briery Creek Lake. Farm ponds and the many Game Department ponds are also excellent prospects for June bream. In this department, honorable mention has to go to Nottoway Lake, Airfield Pond and Amelia Lake.

A special attraction in June is the often excellent fishing for big—I say—BIG brown trout at Lake Moomaw in Bath and Alleghany counties. Last year this lake produced big browns ranging from 3 to almost 9 pounds.

June is a stellar month in saltwater. This month we witness the return of cobia to the bay and bluefin tuna in the ocean, some fine black drum action and the appearance of schools of spadefish on the wrecks. This is a month that holds a couple of weeks of striped bass fishing on the bay and early this month we have the always eventful Reedville Bluefish Derby.

Early this month we can celebrate National Fishing Week (June 5-13) and children can take advantage of the two free fishing days (June 5-6) to take their parents to a local pond where they can rediscover the thrills of fishing and the joys of being outdoors on a day in June. □



Schools out, so take them fishing. Photo by William B. Kittrell, Jr.

lakes as Lake Chesdin, Lake Gaston, Leesville Reservoir, Smith Mountain Lake and Clayton Lake would also be more productive right now.

June is also a good month on the smallmouth bass rivers. If there isn't too much rain the water temperatures and the stream flows should be ideal for smallmouths, rockbass and those feisty red-breasted bream, sometimes called "sun perch" by the locals.

Last year in mid-June there was some excellent crappie fishing at Buggs Island Lake and below Kerr



On The Water

by Kathy Gillikin, Boating Education Instructor

Summer Sensations...Smart Boating

Slow summer days are fast approaching when the air is tepid and the morning invites us outdoors. For those of us water lovers, there is nothing quite as relaxing as being on the water in the cool early morning hours parting the water with our hull, gently making waves of our own. Nonpowered paddle boats don't compete with the silence of the morning stillness. However, most boaters have outboard motor-boats (usually 16 feet or smaller in length) which do produce some sound during operation. Whether you are enjoying the scenery or looking for that hidden fishing spot, the summer promises some wonderful boating days.

By planning your excursions, knowing the rules of the waterways, avoiding alcoholic beverages and organizing your boating equipment in advance, you will do your best to avoid becoming one of Virginia's boating accident statistics. Don't forget that the water will be quite cool until mid-summer; take extra precautions to avoid a surprise spill and hypothermia. You will appreciate your advance planning when your goal is to get out on the water as soon as possible to enjoy the morning or participate in some exciting boating activities with friends.

There is little space on small boats so finding safety essentials that can be easily stored on your boat is a good idea. Some reminders and helpful tips are suggested here for your review. Have a safe and enjoyable boating season!

Must Haves

* 1 PFD or life jacket per person (U.S. Coast Guard approved, correct

size, in good condition, and readily accessible--Type I or Type II Personal Flotation Devices offer the best flotation, especially when unconscious)

* Boats 16 feet in length and over must have a Type IV throwable PFD on board

* Fire Extinguisher (Check the gauge before each trip to make sure it's fully charged. Check which type you are required to have for your boat size and type. One B-1 fire extinguisher is sufficient for boats up to 26 feet in length with closed compartments.)

* Ventilation (Check the requirements for your boat in the *Virginia Watercraft Owner's Guide* available from the Virginia Department of Game & Inland Fisheries. All boats factory-manufactured after 1980 should meet ventilation requirements.)

* Visual Distress Signal (Not required in most circumstances for boats under 16 feet during day operation, but good to have an orange flag or 3 flares at least.)

* Sound Producing Device (a loud whistle or horn, audible for one nautical mile is helpful)

* Backfire Flame Arrestor (for inboard and inboard/outboard engines)

* Boat Registration Card and Properly Displayed Registration Number

Should Haves

* Checklist of Must Haves and Should Haves

* *Virginia Watercraft Owner's Guide* and Engine Manual (in plastic bags)

* Appropriate Anchor with Line Attached

* Extra Line

* Flashlight (Check the batteries.)

* First Aid Kit (antibacterial cream, bandages, alcohol or disinfectant, sunscreen, ice pack, oral antihistamine, hydrocortisone cream, elastic bandage, etc.)

* Bucket for Bailing

* Compass

* Oar

* Spare Engine Parts and Extra Propeller

* Depth Finder if Available

* Essential Tools

* Drinking Water and Cooler (for snacks and meals--pack food in airtight plastic bags)

* Bag (to keep all of these items)

* 1 Small Carry-on Bag Per Person (for their personal items)

Don't forget, personal watercraft (PWC) operators MUST be 16 years old. Fourteen and 15-year-olds may operate a PWC with a certificate from a U.S. Coast Guard approved course and if they present the certificate during operation upon request by law enforcement officials.

Contact your local office of the Virginia Department of Game & Inland Fisheries for specific requirements for your boat's length or stop by and pick-up the revised *Virginia Watercraft Owner's Guide* for 1999. □



Naturally, Wild



by Spike Knuth

For awhile its name was changed to northern oriole, but recently taxonomists reinstated the original name, Baltimore oriole. It was the Swedish naturalist, Linnaeus, who originally named it in honor of Lord Baltimore whose family colors matched those of this bird.

A dollop of sun shining on a male oriole in the dense summer greenery appears as glowing coals or fire in the trees. The male orioles appear in Virginia in early to mid-May. Their clear, whistled notes announce their arrival, often when the black locust blooms. You may see them at York River State Park, along the Staunton River near Brookneal, or in the deciduous woodlands of the Phelps Wildlife Management Area, in Fauquier County.

Orioles favor larger trees in the city, in parks, small towns, along country roads and along rivers. They seem to prefer elms, but will be found in sycamores, cottonwoods and fruit orchards of apple, peach and cherry. The females arrive later to the same general area they had nested the previous year.

The female builds the nest, which is one of this bird's most outstanding characteristics. She anchors and suspends the nest with a foundation of strong fibrous materials, then expertly weaves plant fibers of various kinds, grasses, and animal hair to form a hanging pocket 4 to 6 inches deep. It's almost always gray in color. It is not only a work of art, but is durable, often lasting two or three years. Yet, the nest is rarely—if ever—used again.

About four to six white eggs, speckled and scrawled with dark brown and black, are laid. The male sings constantly from a perch close by while the female is laying and incubating. The young hatch in 12 to 14 days. The male assists in the feed-

ing. The diet of the oriole is mostly insects, but does include some fruits. Caterpillars make up about a third of the oriole's diet, but it also feeds on lice, weevils, beetles and ants.

Baltimore orioles have one brood and once the family is fledged, the adults begin their molt, usually leav-

ing the breeding area and going into dense woods or swamps. From late August and into September, they begin meandering southward to Mexico, Central America, Columbia and Venezuela, although some winter along the South Atlantic and Gulf Coasts. □



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